

2000 Annual Report Executive Summary

Northeast Louisiana Delta Enterprise Community

Northeast Louisiana Delta Community Development Corporation (NELDCDC), a community based nonprofit corporation organized in 1995, serves as the lead entity for the federally designated Northeast Louisiana Delta Enterprise Community. Northeast Louisiana Delta Community Development Corporation has a significant community development track record serving Northeast Louisiana, particularly Madison and East Carroll Parishes. NELDCDC practices a holistic approach to community development, combining human capital and economic development principles. Education, housing, recreation, economic development and other programs work in conjunction with, and build upon, each other.

The economic development strategy focuses on strengthening existing efforts at recruiting prospects and growing small businesses and entrepreneurs. NELDCDC has partnered with the University of Louisiana at Monroe's Small Business Development Center and Grambling State University's College of Business to provide technical assistance to potential and existing businesses through one-on-one counseling, workshops and seminars. Emphasis is placed on creating economic opportunities and sustaining community development through entrepreneurial initiatives.

One-on-one management and technical assistance has been provided to 27 clients during this reporting period. Several small business seminars were held in 2000 for potential and existing entrepreneurs. One (1) Fast Trac I workshop was held in 2000 and a total of four (4) since the project began, graduating 19 students.

NELDCDC has contributed much to these efforts with the opening of its own small business incubator, the Tallulah Business Plaza in November 2000.

The Tallulah Business Plaza has six (6) tenants. Three (3) of the tenants are graduates from the Fast Trac Business program, a technical assistance program partnered between NELDCDC and the University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM). One (1) tenant has received a loan from NELDCDC and two (2) others are applying for a loan.

This project was made possible by a \$350,000 grant from the Office of Community Services, Department of Health and Human Services (Historically Black College and University Program). Partners in the project include Grambling State University - College of Business, University of Louisiana at Monroe - Small Business Development Center and Rural Development (United States Department of Agriculture).

NELDCDC's economic efforts were recognized in May 2000 at the Delta Vision, Delta Voices: The Mississippi Delta Beyond 2000 conference held in Washington, DC. Northeast Louisiana Delta Community Development's contribution to the low unemployment rate from 1995-1999 was used as a model for job creation and business development in Delta Vision, Delta Voices: The Mississippi Delta Beyond 2000, a literary work distributed at the conference. Madison Parish's unemployment rate fell from 14% in January 1995 to 6% in June 1999, the lowest rate ever recorded here.

NELDCDC was a crucial partner in recruiting Avondale Shipyard to locate a parts manufacturing facility in Madison Parish. With financing by three (3) local banks and Enterprise Community funds, Northeast Louisiana Delta Community Development Corporation purchased and industrial site nears the Madison Parish Port. Avondale currently employs approximately 140 welders, shipfitters and support

personnel at an average wage of \$10.50 an hour. At full capacity, Avondale should employ 300-350 individuals with good wages with a chance for upward mobility.

The merger of Litton Industries and Avondale Shipbuilding was completed in August 2000. The Avondale recruitment project has brought together elected economic development and business leaders at the federal, state, and local levels.

NELDCDC, a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) has closed nearly \$1 million in loans, creating or saving approximately 250-350 jobs in the region. NELDCDC has received commitments of more than \$175,000 (Kellogg's MSDI, \$50,000 and AmSouth Bank \$125,000) as matching funds for its CDFI core component application to be filed in March 2001.

NELDCDC housing strategy is to provide rehabilitation and affordable homes to low and moderate income families in the community. Utilizing USDA's Rural Development and Health and Human Services' Social Services Block Grant funds, more than seventy (70) homes have been repaired. NELDCDC completed its first new home construction in February 2000. NELDCDC has also assisted families in applying for funds for housing rehabilitation and construction through USDA Rural Development.

NELDCDC's commitment to Education is apparent through its continuance of the Community Based After School Tutorial, Community Based Summer Enrichment, and ACT/GED Preparation programs. The assistance for these programs is funded with the help of the Department of Education and Mid South Delta Initiative, a W.K. Kellogg foundation. These are valuable programs for the area youths and adults.

The Community Based After School Tutorial program provides academic remediation for area youth in grades K-12 with deficiencies in math, reading and writing. The Tutorial program is staffed with experienced certified teachers and and a certified counselor/testing coordinator.

The Community Based Summer Day Enrichment program held in June 2000 with a tremendous success. The summer day enrichment program provided area youths in grades K-12 with a fun, challenging learning environment. The students got an opportunity to reinforce academic skills learned during the school year in a fun atmosphere

The A.C.T./G.E.D. programs also, are successful programs piloted by NELDCDC's Delta Learning and Resource Center. To date 11 students have successfully completed the G.E.D. program and received their high school diploma, and two are currently testing.

The After School Tutorial program has been successful in preparing area students for the LEAP and IOWA standardized tests. In the Spring 2000 the After School Tutorial program was successful in improving area students scores on the LEAP and IOWA tests.

NELDCDC sponsors and coordinates youth sport leagues in football, basketball, and baseball. To date over 800 area youth have participated annually in the youth recreation leagues. Coaches and volunteers also serve as mentors for the youth and work closely with the schools and teachers to promote the educational development for the youth.

NELDCDC provided transportation and tickets for area youth to attend a NFL game in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 2000.